

"Chilling" Child Sacrifices Found at Prehistoric Site

The skeletons of dozens of children killed as part of a ritual bloodletting sacrifice a thousand years ago have been discovered in northern Peru, a new study says. The remains are the earliest evidence of ritualized blood sacrifice and mutilation of children that has so far been seen in the South American Andes, according to study leader Haagen Klaus."

Seeds of a paralytic and hallucinogenic plant called Nectandra, which also prevents blood clotting, were found with the skeletons, suggesting the children were drugged before their throats were slit and their chests cut open. "It is so beyond what is necessary to kill a person. It really gives you the chills," Klaus, an anthropologist at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah, told National Geographic News.

Read more at: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2010/12/101223-child-sacrifices-bloodletting-archaeology-science/>



Crown Suggests Queen Arsinoë II Ruled Ancient Egypt as Female Pharaoh

A unique queen's crown with ancient symbols combined with a new method of studying status in Egyptian reliefs forms the basis for a re-interpretation of historical developments in Egypt in the period following the death of Alexander the Great. A thesis from the University of Gothenburg (Sweden) argues that Queen Arsinoë II ruled ancient Egypt as a female pharaoh, predating Cleopatra by 200 years.

Read more at: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/11/101128194011.htm>

Chemists help archaeologists to probe biblical history

Fabled as a site of biblical battles and spectacular palaces, Tel Megiddo today is a dusty mound overlooking Israel's Jezreel valley. It is also host to one of the hottest debates in archaeology - a controversy over the historical truth of the Bible's account of the first united Kingdom of Israel. Ancient Megiddo is said to have been a key administrative and military centre in the kingdom ruled by King David and his son Solomon during the eleventh and tenth centuries BC. But the biblical narrative is challenged by archaeologists such as Israel Finkelstein of Tel Aviv University, who believe that David and Solomon did not rule over an Iron Age empire.

Read more at: <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=chemists-help-archaeologists-t>



Are These Prehistoric Game Boards?

Mysterious semicircles of holes in the floor may be dice scoreboards, archaeologist Barbara Voorhies, a professor emerita at the University of California, Santa Barbara, said recently. If so, the circles are the oldest known evidence of games in Mesoamerica, a region that stretches from Mexico to Costa Rica.



Read more at:

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2010/12/photogalleries/101213-oldest-games-gambling-archaeology-science-pictures/>



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<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2010/12/101222-new-human-species-dna-nature-science-evolution-fossil-finger/>

New Type of Ancient Human Found—Descendants Live Today?

A previously unknown kind of human—the Denisovans—likely roamed Asia for thousands of years, probably interbreeding occasionally with humans like you and me, according to a new genetic study. In fact, living Pacific islanders in Papua New Guinea may be distant descendants of these prehistoric pairings, according to new analysis of DNA from a girl's 40,000-year-old pinkie bone, found in Siberian Russia's Denisova cave. This "new twist" in human evolution adds substantial new evidence that different types of humans—so-called modern humans and Neanderthals, modern humans and Denisovans, and perhaps even Denisovans and Neanderthals—mated and bore offspring, experts say.

Lost Civilization Under Persian Gulf?

A once fertile landmass now submerged beneath the Persian Gulf may have been home to some of the earliest human populations outside Africa, according to an article published in *Current Anthropology*. Jeffrey Rose, an archaeologist and researcher with the University of Birmingham in the U.K., says that the area in and around this "Persian Gulf Oasis" may have been host to humans for over 100,000 years before it was swallowed up by the Indian Ocean around 8,000 years ago. Rose's hypothesis introduces a "new and substantial cast of characters" to the human history of the Near East, and suggests that humans may have established permanent settlements in the region thousands of years before current migration models suppose.



Read more at: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/12/101208151609.htm>